REALTY'S SECRET

By ALAN MUIR.

Author of 'Vanity Hardware,' "Golden

CHAPTER IX. IS WHICH SOPHIA'S EYES FILL WITH TEARS. For some reason, which I cannot divine Son a treated the proposal of the leather half's son as an affront. The matter At-in Kettlewell everything did ooze merter later; and to one or two intinated is mis who spoke to her on the subject Santa expressed herself with a sareasi an eas perhaps, not fair, and was ceraprodent: Some kind friend was at and traing young John Done in what raticule and contempt Sophia had hard made. This gentleman in his does not come before us, and it is to ay that certain disclosures which and the Sophia's ears about this time and the conduct of Percival Brent in were indirectly communicated to ber insulted admirer, who, as has had met Sophia's lover when

there resided in Kettlewell a widow of good and small fortune, by name Mrs. and Mrs. Hands, relishing the fat of the house of Done, and the house of leng gratified by the aroma of ariswhich hung around Mrs. Hands about an alliance between the and defensive, which was aland hers enthusiastically maintained on the and sale about lunch and dinner hour. We Hands was a woman who had seen a gleat tell of the world, and could converse She had a beautiful set of teeth about notice her smile a great deal, and any laugh which caused people to feel comhandle and between the laugh and the had a reputation for thorough good she was known in every house in kathewell; she carried gossip with the punetuality of a postman; she had broken off an matches by her solitary act and deed: h was a kind of parlor carthquake, making spots and fissures and shakings innumerable batherto stable households; and yet for all of the true character of Mrs. Hands was me spected, and everybody said she was such a mad-humored woman that it was a pleasure even to see her. Which shows

nade with can be done with a beautiful set of noth and a smile and a jolly laugh disnot a perted in the talk now and then Mrs. Hands was no favorite with Mrs. Temthat prudent woman, min ful of an and malice, never said what the thought of the widow; but she knew, and the wallow knew. In her way, Mrs. Hands tanval the superior and more scientific worldhas as was shown by the contraction of her spale and the reduction of her laughter whenever Mr. Temple was by. But Sophia liked the widow and thought she had a good heart. the marning, alout four months after the and there was to be seen on her face a renate kable solli itude and depression, so much, while usked, after a little ca ual talk, and the had disturbed her. Interfed me." the widow exe'n : ... 'O Soll inv beart is bleeding this morning!"

"For anybody

For courself, dear girl. Now I will not har word in suspense. Is it not true-I know stone that you are still in your heart begon; up w th the elergyman's son, Percival s plan furned as white as death. Two or

ther stronge whispers about Percival had let ears from different quarters in line you any news of him? Is he ill? and yet illness was not what she

dear girl," the widow said, recapture her with eves that absolutely moistend by what art or emotion I know not se mild the widow have told herself from Brent is a bad young man-unworths of you-unworthy of your love," What do you mean?" Sophia asked, drawing berself up with a kind of proud rebuke, which are their a threatening of tears in its

service dignation. "Nothing lad can be true Nations good, Sophia," the widow redaking her head religiously. "It is to be to tell it to you, but it is my duty, has and my privilege, too; for who would serific d to such a fellow?" Y a must not talk so," So hia said, in a

in the first place, dear, he has not been in his trade-business, whatever He has lest everything-or the with whom he was in partnership has start thing, or has died, or something un-

how Brent is nowhere at all in for the cannot help," Sophia said, and her

Perhaps not, dear; but he could help being the Kong fond of fast company, being fond distribution, at least, of being at places where to do drink-and all that sort of thing. has been his ruin, for ruined he is." I ha't see much in what you say," Sophia Whenever a young man fails in ready to blame him, and ready White ould you expect? and all that."

. We he always smoked, and he always drank wine," Sophia answered hotly. water once he has taken a little too much, hal - f course spiteful people say that he rake and has ruined himself by it."

Had she really spoken her whole mind she would have said: "One offense he has never " l'el-le has never been false to me; refere his peccadilloes shall be for-

Sophia!" the widow exclaimed, - more than that. How young you are while that such things ever go alone! Per-- well, my dear, he is not over particand that his morals, and that's the long and

I me all you know," Sophia exclaimed, on her visitor almost fiercely, and with eyes that enforced an instantaneous re-

West then, my dear, he has been untrue "Marrad!" Sophia gasped, "to-to Bessie

words," And he is not married, but a great He s well known out there for his have for fast women, and he has made public a secusial of himself with an actress-

a morrial woman, I believe, only her husband is a buruard, I am told." that the you know all this?" Sophia asked. be was scarcely audible; for she was Son sore that her lover c false,

"the relay little bird me," the widow the Latter journitives and sickened poor Source Forget him, dear, Be a girl of "Treet him as hadeserved" "llev to con know all thisf" Sophia remed putting her is not to her forehead and

"It is / a in a tone of genuine anguish. "T il Q- le o, know str Wardear, of you not hear everythingand is hape to be better - look here." The colow drew from her maff a newsleter and opining is, pointed to a marked Jura. . . The paper was an Aust.a an

- day peragraph, as will be seen, was things with that engaging ease and I guthe could which are characteristic of certhey - mial journals. A ACCIDENT IN THE SUBURBS.-

Yesterday evening as Percival Brent was Grang Mrs Languan to the theatre after a pleasant much in the country, the horses can away, pantably having had too much Moet & Thurston-a beverage which, though it bever affects the driver, is sometimes known to have an exciting effect on the steeds. After a wild career, through the streets the Vehicle was turned over close by the theatre and the occurants thrown into the street, after which, lightened of their load, the inebriated animals proceeded to drag the vehicle to smash with amazing celerity. Young Per-Ival got a heavy cut on the left temple, but Mrs. Lanigan, marvelous to tell, came of | if I am not able to get out again this winter

ment and, mindful of the poet's advice, he went to Mrs. Lanigan's side, "to take her up tenderly," and "lift her with care." The news of the accident and its happy termination soon spread in the theatre, and when Mrs. Lanigan appeared on the stage the house rang with plaudits. Nobody thought of poor Percival, his countenance being of value to himself only, while Mrs. Lanigan's is dear to the

"A word in your ear, dear," cried the widow, when Sophia had finished. And she whispered something at which the poor girl's cheek broke into a flame. "Now, Sophia," she said aloud, "have I not convinced you!"

"I feel a little tired," Sophia answered. "I don't know what to think just yet. If you will excuse me, and look in another morning, I shall be glad."

"Certainly, love," the good humored widow replied, not sorry to be free now that her work was done. "Don't be cast down : It's all for the best. You will soon get a husband. Think of Mr. Prendergast, or, better still; think of that excellent young feilow, John Done. He is dying for you still; I am sure of it."

"Look in another day," Sophia said mechanically; and the widow took herself of Poor Sophia stood silent, just where Mra. Hands left her, still holding the hateful paper which had stabbed her to the heart. She was numb and stupid with the blow. For this, then, she had loved and waited in uncomplaining constancy for nearly six years! Only to learn that her lover was a rake—satisfied and pleased with the caresses of a light dame like Mrs. Lanigan—unworthy of her affection, or the affection of any true woman! Had there been any excuse for him, even had it been the blaming of herself, gladly she would have pleaded it before her own judgment now. Had she been married to him she might have disappointed his expectation, and so driven him to other women for pleasure. Had they even been meeting occasionally she might not have been warm enough, charming enough; twenty excuses might have been urged on his behalf. Now the fault must have been all his own. She had kept her vow and had found the joy of her life in keeping it. If any doubt of him had crept into her mind at times she had rebuked it instantaneously. With her whole soul, morning, noon and night, and with an almost religious punctuality, she had cherished his memory, encircling it with her warmest memories and her purest prayers. And here he was exchanging her love for the favors of an actress, who sold her smiles with as quick an eye to profit as a shopman sells his wares. The downfall of Sophia's hopes was complete. The most refined ingenuity could not have discovered a more perfect and total form of torture. Her whole life was turned into a wilderness. Her mother was right. Better live for the world, better marry for money, better lay hold of material comfort and the pleasures of sense and fashion. These had no power to break and crush the heart like lofty ideas refuted by reality, and devoted hopes crushed by hard fact. With

BOOK SIX.

all tirese thoughts whirling through her brain

in a struggling crowd, Sophia stood on, stony

and tearless, in the center of the room, until

n'den'y the door was thrown open, and

Mrs. Temple's maid came flying in with her

cap disordered and dismay in every feature.

O, don't lose a minute, miss, not a minute!"

LADY BEAUTY'S JOY.

CHAPTER I. THE TIMEPIECE OF ONE GAY LIFE BEGINS

TO STRIKE THE MIDNIGHT QUARTERS. Sophia found her mother seated on the edge of the bed pale and exhausted, but with nothing about her to account for her maid's sudden excitement. The old woman passed her hand feebly across her forehead, trying,

it seemed, to collect her thoughts, and then "Have I been asleep? I must have been sleep! Where is Jones! Did I not see her here? O, Sophy, I have had such an odd and sat on the bedside, and she had a lover

dream! I thought there was a ball here-in this room, and yet my bed was here too and I lying on it, and between the dances a girl in a blue dress, whose face I could not see, came with her, and they were toying and kissing. and then I called out something and afterward awoke. I suppose I awoke. I had not known I was asleep." The maid subsequently told Sophia that,

so far as she knew, her mistress had not been asleep at all; that all of a sudden she began to call out very loud, as if she were scolding; and that in the midst of a torrent of words she became deadly rale and seemed to faint away. Seeing this, the maid had rushed off for Sephia, and upon their return the old woman was come to herself, and sitting down as Scobia had found her. The doctor being ent for, made the usual inquiries and examinations, and ordered his patient to bed for a day or two, saying that she had overax d for strength; but when alone with Soph a he told her that there had evidently een an a tack in the brain which might be the for runner of something very grave, or might be only-a symptom of weakness and

"The latter I think," he said as he was V but smoking, dear-drinking-fast leaving; "your mother is a very aged person, I should fancy, and her last decay has probably begun. How long she may live no one can say; but she will not be the same woman again, and the rest of her life will be going down hill, how fast or how slow depends on

her constitution and our care." "I told you, Sophy, that I felt a little sh ken," the old woman said, when her daughter came back to her bedside. "Don't you remember what I said about the peach rees! A little rest, Sophy, will set me up-a little rest. I have had a hard life of it, enjoying myself; I don't feel tired of that in the least, but every one wants rest sometimes."

There followed the contraction of life which is the sure token of advancing age. Old Mrs. Temple got up late; she seldom drove out, and then only at the sunniest hours, and she had all through the day her little delicaciesturtle soup in tablespoons, champagne in tiny glasses, and all the usual dainty forms of nourishment for wasting lives. Sophia remarked, however, that her mother was more than ever solicitous about expense.

she would say. How much is this a quart?a guinea, I daresay. And as to sending to Gunter's, Sophy, it is waste, sinful waste. You would get it quite as good at the confectioner's here. Fancy if I went on with champagne and turtle at this rate for a year or two, why, money would come to an end,

Sophy-money would come to an end." Everything pointed in one direction: Mrs. Temple was living on capital; and she dreaded the approaching exhaustion of her means. Sophia tried to get some knowledge of her affairs.

"Could not I do that for you, mamma?" she asked one day, as the old woman was figuring over her bank book. "You, Sophy!" she answered, with a gleam of her former vivacity. "You, dear child!

you would not know which side is whichwhich is the mother and which the banker." "Let Archibald help you, then?" Sophia re-"Archibald, indeed!" the old woman exclaimed. "That great man stooping to my

little bit of Lusiness would be like a camel trying to get through a needle's eye. No, thank you. Elsewhere, too, some gleams of her old

spirit broke through the clouds of weakness and illness, but Sophia, watching her narrowly, thought the vivacity only assumed. Even now she fancied she could discern a look of deeper care on the old woman's face as she returned to her calculations. Next day they drove to the bank, and feeble as Mrs. Temple was she insisted on going in alone; and she had a long interview with the manager. When she came out she showed Sophia a roll of notes.

"Two hundred and fifty pounds, Sophy," she said. "I shall put it in my drawer, and

business again-mind that; and you need not pay any bills just at present. What ready money is wanted we can take out of

All this was alarming to Sophia. She was not the girl to give way to covetousness at a time like this; but who, without uneasiness, could face the prospect of supplies perhaps suddenly cut off at the most trying juncture As to herself, Sophia did not feel much anxiety. Had Percival continued true to ber, how gladly she would have put any fortune she might have inherited into his hands to repair his loss, but now she was not interested enough in life to fear poverty. Beyoud care for her mother she imagined there

was nothing to live for. She had tried even after Mrs. Hands' visit to dishelieve the reports which had seemed so fatally authenticated; but the very next day Sibyl told her that she, too, had heard from another quarter the most indifferent account of Percival. At this Sophia became hopeless. It was curious that the only person to whom she said anything about her trouble was Prendergast. Whatever had passed at the time of his proposal had set up something like an intimacy between them; and one day when he called noticing that she looked pale, he made some remark upon the trial her mother's illness

"It is not, mamma," she replied; "that could bear: but oh, I feel so weary and sick! I have heard such dreadful things about the man I believed loved me. Have you heard anything? Oh, do you believe it all?" "I am afraid Brent has forgotten himself," Prendergast replied gravely, and said no

Meanwhile her sisters, with the above exception, maintained on the subject an ominous and dreary silence; and her mother, whom she carefully kept in ignorance of the reports, never mentioned Percival's name. So poor Sophia, with her broken hopes, went her dull round from day to day, nursing her mother and communing with her own sad heart, and there was not one ray of cheerfulness in her life. She grew pale and worn: and though she tried to be cheerful, every one could see that care was eating her spirit and strength away. Certainly the constrast of her appearance with that of Caroline or even with that of Sibyl, was a warning against living for an idea in this worldly world. The other sisters might not indeed have grasped the whole substance-in this life who does? But Sophia's very shadow had vanished away, and she was quite alone, and destitute not only of pleasure but of illusion, too.

CHAPTER II. MRS. TEMPLE DELIVERS A FAREWELL SER-

MON ON LIFE. Winter darkened on apace, and while the old woman's health more visibly de clined, Sophia was pained to find that she would not allow the idea of death to near her. From occasional remarks that she let fall, it seemed that Mrs. Temple was willfully mainwith an undercurrent of conviction that she was to die after all. But to Sophia she always ' spoke as if her recovery were a certainty and she even said one day: "Next year I shall go to Paris and the year after that to Vienna."

"Come, miss! come quick!" she called out. "Come up stairs; missus is going on so queer! "Mamma," Sophia said seriously, when she heard this extraordinary speech, "next year! and the year after that! Does it never strike

you how uncertain life is?" "Of course life is uncertain," the old woman replied briskly. "I never knew the time when it was anything else. But we must make our arrangements, and then take our chance. You were taught to dance when you were seven years old; although you would not require it for nine years more, and life was as uncertain then as now. Still, it would never have done not to have taught you to

"Yes, but when one is weak and sick these things seem to come nearer, don't they, mamma?" Sophia said with the greatest ten-

"Seem to come, Sophy! They do come nearer. I wish they did not. But that is no reason why we should bring them nearer still by our own reflections and guesses." "But, mamma," Sophia said, now resolved

to press the matter, "ought we not at such times to think a little about the other world. and prepare for it?" "Prepare for the other world!" the old woman exclaimed, impatiently. "Tell me, how shall we do it? You talk as if one could make ready for the other world like a flower

show or a ball. I don't know anything about

the other world. I hope everything will be right, but there is nothing I can do." "See a clergyman, mamma," Sophia said, growing timid before her mother's unwaver ing hardnesss. "See Mr. Knox. He is very kind, I am sure, and not the sort of man to

excite von. "Very well, Sophy," her mother retorted, getting a little flushed with excitement, but speaking with sarcastic self-repression. "Let us suppose Mr. Knox comes to see me. I can tell you what will happen. He will have a black book with him, which at first he will try to keep out of sight, and he will edge it into view as he is talking about the weather. That will be a signal to me of what is coming. Then he will begin by saying that this is a world full of pain and care and trouble." She hit off the clergyman's voice exactly, but more, it seemed, from her old habit of ridicule than from any present wish to be flippant. "If I say what I think, I shall answer, 'Not a bit of it; it is a cozy, bright world enough, and I never complained of it.' Then he will go on and talk about loving the world. 'Well,' I ought to say, 'I do love it, and never more than now when I am shut out from it.' 'Yes,' he will say, 'but people ought to be serious.' 'Serious!' shall answer. Believe me, the person who produces one hearty laugh from another does good in the world. Serious, indeed! give me round faces, not long ones.' Won't this be improving talk, Sophy, and do good to me and good to Mr. Knox? Then he will talk about sickness being a blessing, and if I give him my mind I shall say that sickness is one of the few things I know which is an unmitigated bother and perplexity. Won't that make Knox whistle! He will feel he must put me down; and next he will say we are all sinners. What then? If I say the truth I shall answer: 'I don't see it. I have done my best in life. I have not been a liar, or a thief, or cruel. Enjoyment came to me and I took it, and what a fool I should have been if I had not taken it! But I have tried to be a good mother and a kind friend, and though I don't mean to say that I have not often been in fault like other people, still I have never done anything to make a fuss about. The Almighty won't judge us for mistakes and little slips of temper—that I am quite sure of. I have always gone to church when I could, and if there is any better way to heaven than that I don't know it, nor anybody else.' So please, Sophy, don't have Mr. Knox here: either I say what I do think and shock him, or I say what I don't think, which is not likely to do any good to anybody."

"But, mamma," Sophia went on, "do you never feel as if you wanted something better than this world! It is very happy and all that while it lasts; but do you never wish for another?"

"Never, Sophia!" her mother replied, now with distinct harshness in her voice. "I have told you a hundred times. I am satisfied with the world, and with other people, and with myself. I tell you I find only one fault with the world-I want it to last, and it won't."

This reply was delivered in a way that finally closed the conversation, and Sophia never dared again allude to the subject. December drew to its close, and she saw that her mother was more and more declining in strength, and that even ber insatiable appetite for the world itself was departing. She no longer cared to hear the talk of the town. Her beloved Morning Post would lie day after day unopened. The little meals, which she used to take with the eagerness of one who is determined to overcome illness, were now languidly put aside to another hour. She slept more frequently, and everything showed plainly that she was quitting

the stage of the world, where, a pepular

CHAPTER III.

SOPHIA HAS THREE COUNSELORS.

Nor was poor Sophia left alone with her sorrow. We have all friends in this worldcome who wish us well, and some who wish us nothing of the kind. Ill wishers and well. wishers sometimes are equals in making us uneasy And thus it was with Sophia, for while she was shut up with her mother in the nick house various persons found opportunity to disturb her with counsel or warning. The indefatigable Mrs. Hands, who had fully made up her mind that the young woman must and should marry young John Done, managed to work her way into the house several times. Sophia now feared and hated the widow in equal parts, although she could not deny that, in telling her the truth about Percival, she had acted the part of a friend

"My dear Sophia," this energetic dame said, "I hear that Brent is coming homebankrupt, they say: character and cash both gone! I should like to see you comfortably settled before that time, and in a position to treat him as he deserves. Now, while your mother is still living, and able to be comforted, settle yourself, Sophia, settle yourself. My dear, I know one young man, a least, who would be at your feet in an hour after the time I told him there was a hope that you would change your mind and say 'yes.' I know the young man."

"Thank you," Sophia replied, hastily, Her cheeks were on fire at the bare idea o seeing Percival again. "I shall stay with mamma to the last; and I am not going to marry any one." "Certainly not a man who has treated you

badly," the widow said, resolved to pledge

Sophia to this much, at least, "I am not going to marry anybody," Sophia epeated, tartly. She had another counselor Egerton, hav ing heard that Percival was returning, ventured to advise Souhia on the whole sub-

"It is not his being a little wild, Sophia that I would so much object to," he said We are all that sometimes. I mean all young fellows, not girls, though I said 'we.' had what we call an affair with Miss Johnson at that glove shop myself many years ago, and it went so far that once or twice we were on the point of going out walking together, and all that sort of thing-you know what I mean, Sophia; but it was the time for the equinoctial gales, and the weather got insettled and that stopped it; and then I got engaged to Caroline, and she was such a tremendously fine girl that she steadied me. I don't want to find fault with Percival Brent, who is not half a bad fellow, I think. But you are not the woman for him. Sophia, that is where it is-you are not the woman for him. In every case a woman ought to be the woman for a man. A man of Percival's sort ought to be engaged to a woman with a whip in her hand. Some of us-I mean the fellows with 'go'-want to be influenced, and things to be brought to bear on us, and we want forcible feminine character about us, and the rest of it, and in such cases there is nothing like a woman with a whip in her

More solemn and weighty words were addressed to the poor heart-sick girl. Goldmore no sooner heard that Percival was coming back than he became sincerely alarmed for Sonhia's future

"I tremble for that girl," he said to his wife one morning, "kind, impressible, virtuous as she is. I wish she would accept Prendergast, who is as much in love with her as ever, and to whom fortune will make no difference I fear-I very greatly fear-that Sophia will be very poor at her mother's death. Everything points that way. But she is the sweetest of girls," he added in tones of solemn approval: "she is a sister you may well be proud of, and she shall never want a brother while I live, Sibyl. She shall live here if she will make this house her home."

"I don't know that Sophy would care to live here," Sibyl answered curtly. "She is fanciful and quixotic. Perhaps she will marry Percival Brent after all." "Not after his improper behavior," Gold-

nore remarked, with the solemn morality of Great Driton. Sibyl laughed a little. "Women forgive that sometimes," she said. Accordingly Goldmore, in fear of something which he could not quite define to himself, resolved to give Sophia the benefit of his experience of life. His kindness and his good

intentions were undoubted, and his words

were those of a man who "knows." "Don't be deceived by that soft forgiving heart of yours into marrying a profligate. Sophia," he said. "A young man may fall into many errors and come out of them, and be as good as ever, but a profligate never returns to the state of his youth. He may seem respectable, but he is never truly restored. He has lost that which he can never regain. There will always be a hardness and a coarseness about him, and he may any hour relapse into evil ways. Such men make a pretense of reforming when they want to marry, and perhaps even believe themselves reformed but, Sophia, a profligate can no more reform and be what once he was than a man who has lost an eye can see again as perfectly as when he had two. Be firm, Sophia! Be true

to yourself. Hear nothing the young man

Poor Sophia began to cry. "I am not saying this thoughtlessly, my dear girl," Goldmore continued, taking her hand. "I admire a young woman who loves a man and will make a sacrifice for him, and may take the liberty of assuring you, Sophia (so great is my interest in you), that I had resolved, had the young man been honorable, that no little difficulty of a pecuniary kind should have stood in your way. But

magnate upon him once more, "I must interfere in quite another sort of way." Late that night, when weary Sophia stole back to her mother's room, she found it dark, for the lamp had gone out. "Are you awake, mamma?"

now, Sophia," Goldmore said, with all the

"Is that you, Sophia?" the old woman answered, in a clear and singularly collected voice. "That girl in blue is here again, you

"What, mamma? Where?" "Here, at the end of the bed, and that" young fellow with her. They have been dancing, and came here afterward. They have not spoken to me, not a word. Only they sit there kissing and laughing. I don't object to laughing or kissing either; only they should not choose this place, where so many people are passing up and down. But, Lord! how

young people will go on!" Time after time during several days the old woman would imagine that the bedroom was a ballroom, and that the girl in blue and her lover were sitting at her bed's end, flirting and misbehaving themselves in a way which tickled the old woman; for she often laughed aloud, and said over and over again: "Lord! how young people will go on!" At last, on Christmas eve, Sophia was sit

ting beside her, and she spoke all at once in a low, penetrating whisper: "Sophy, I know who that girl is now." "Who, mamma?" "Myself. dear-myself." She uttered this

in a whisper of secrecy, low, but intensely clear. "I saw the face just this moment And that is Jack Dallimore-'Spider Jack' we used to call him, he was so thin; but he was clever and so handsome! We stole out together during the dance at Lord Mountjoy's. There he is kissing her again! How

cold it is! Let us go back; let us go back; let

us go back!"

She turned and composed herself to sleep, and all night long she lay placidly. When the doctor came in the morning he found her much weaker, and said she must have brandy every half-hour, for she was sinking fast. But she would take nothing: only slent away. while hour by hour the beating pulse reported failing strength. Sophia, feeling the end was near, sent word to Car and Sibyl, and the three sisters watched beside her all the afternoon while Egerton and Goldmore waited down stairs. The breath grew fainter: fixed lines came out on the mobile face: the three daughters stood round the bed; and the worldly little mother passed without a pang

> CHAPTER IV. PERCIVAL RETURNS.

funeral was over, and Sophia was sitting alone in the dittle morning room which had been her mother's favorite spot. Car and Sibyl had gone home, and Goldmore was down stairs in the library examining the old lady's papers, the greater portion of which had only just now been obtained, as her solicitor had been from home. He had arrived half an hour ago, and, together with Goldmore, was going into the affairs. Sophia sat alone, full of foreboding and dreariness. It was after four o'clock; the sky was sullen and gray; a mist was rising all round the house. Dreary, dreary world! Sophia's beart went off-as it had done a hundred times every day for months past-to Australia and Percival, and that odious Mrs. Lanigan. She had in her mind's eye quite a picture of her rival; a tall, handsome woman with free eyes, a high color, and dark eyebrows and hair. How could Percival have liked such a creature! Then there was the wonder which had haunted her now for weeks. Would Percival come to see her when he arrived in England! Would he

Brent, miss."

She had beard all the gossip of the town; but her face and tone signified that if she were mistress and not maid, Percival should be forgiven at once, and more than forgiven shortly. But Sophia was too agitated for observation. Should she say: Not at home! Engaged! 'Cannot see him! Her heart had almost stopped beating; but, resolved not to let her maid see anything, she said, in as quiet a voice as she could command: "Show him up."



see that she was fit to be seen, as girls say. Let female seers prognosticate what they will from it, she did not care to meet Percivaleven that fickle and false Percival-looking her worst. Then the door opened, and he

was ushered in. and clad in black. She saw him bearded, ness to cast herself in his arms and take her chance. But just then she saw the mark of a cut upon his forehead, and she remembered the accident with Mrs. Lanigan.

Why he had waited that moment I cannot he sprang forward, with his arms stretched passion of grief or disappointment-

The room was half in darkness, and Percival by no means understood the true cause of her agitation. He came to her side, and, kneeling, took her in his arms without a word. She felt his embrace winding about her, so full of strength! She was nothing in his arms! In her wretchedness she felt thankful that he had taken her so. It was not her doing! She was too frail to resist him. And so he drew her gently up until their eyes met

Let me tell you a secret, reader. Some

sound teaching and example. These people are never so awkward as when they are doing anything mean or underhand; and for the rest of their lives their honesty is proclaimed in their aspect. Such was Percival Brent. He was a simple, straightforward man, true by instinct, and the idea of having been seriously false to Sophia-or that he could have been suspected of such an offense-had never crossed his mind. And now, as he looked down into her troubled eyes, his own, which were dark brown, and very speaking in their way, beamed out steadfast rays of love and truth. There was a little surprise, a little sadness in the expression; but the clear, strong gaze could never have come from any but a true man. Sophia felt it. Before he opened his lips she knew she had misjudged him. Already she was beginning to hate herself for her doubts. A moment longer he gazed at her, not, as it would seem, wishing to hurry her kiss; and

that she was going to kiss him first. He gently held her back. day we said good-by at the Beeches?" not speak. Her eyes were running over. -far too broken.

She pressed his hand to tell him how well she remembered all. "But," he continued, in his quiet voice, "while I held you to my heart I vowed a vow that when I took my lips away from yours I would never touch a woman's lips again until ours met once more."

He stopped.

All this ran through her mind, not only faster than it runs from my pen, but faster far, reader, than your eve travels along the line of words. Without a pause Percival went on:

the lips have been all your own since then." "Oh, wait-wait one moment!" she cried. She wished to collect herself for the coming joy. Besides, ought she to kiss him with her eyes wet with tears? So she made ready. Then she turned her warm and melting lips upward, and, as she drank his long kiss, she nighed a sigh of rapture too deep for words, almost too deep for thought. "I am his, and he is mine." Oh, how that pure embrace rewarded her, in one great spell of bliss, for all her waiting and her pain! She forgot everything but her deep happiness. She was in a trance of joy, and all beside joy faded out of her consciousness. There was neither past nor present, neither hope nor fear,

the full and blessed Now! I declare I will not have my lovers peeped at for the next few minutes. And I shall tell you nothing at all, but let your fancy

imagine she did not know! Could she steel her heart and repel him as she ought! So constant had these reflections and ques tionings been of late that what followed was coincidence only in appearance. "Will Percival come to me!" was actually on the tip of that inward tongue with which we soliloguize when her maid came into the room with an expressive face, saving: "Gentleman called to see you, miss," adding, in a kind of unofficial whisper: "It s Mr.



The two stood looking at each other in silence for a moment. He saw her pale, worn. weatherburnt, stronger looking, handsomer than ever. She was ready in her heart-sick-

tell. A man never should pause when the woman he loves shows the smallest sign of readiness for his embrace. Perhaps Percival only wished to give the maid time to go down stairs. It is certain that next moment out, to take Sophia to his breast; but that little space of waiting gave jealousy time to erect a barrier before her heart. She would even then have given the world for his em-brace, if but it had been honest; but per-plexed, torther, and at last fairly mad with jealousy, she turned deadly white, and, sopbing, she cast herself on the couch, where, grasping the satin cushion in her hands in a "Oh, I can't, I can't, I can't!" she cried, in a

men and women-not many-are born in this world who are honest by nature. Earthsprung honesty I should call theirs, to dis-tinguish it from that which is the result of

she grew so impatient to expiate her fault "Sophia," he said, "do you remember the She nodded her head in answer: She could "I could not say good-by. I was too broken

"I understand," Sophia said to herself, with a sudden flash of new interest in his words. "He is going to confess to me about Mrs. Lanigan! I daresay he only flirted with her a bit; and he must have been very lonely in Australia; and no doubt she was very forward-like an actress!"

"And I have kept that yow, Sophia. I wanted to tell you before I kissed you. You can take your good-by kiss back again; for

With a doubting and fearful heart she neither wish nor regret-all was merged in

[To BE CONTINUED.]

you ever had such a moment of love after years of pain! Just recall your own sensations, and leave Percival and Sophia to enjoy theirs undisturbed, as happy lovers should. Even when their first transports are over

there they sit, exchanging at slow intervals one low spoken sentence for another. So at full tide on some quiet coast a wave breaks with a low plash of music on the shore, and then there is silence, and then another wave answers in the same murmuring note, as in its turn it lays its head on the golden beach. Or so, deep in the woods at summer noon, when all beside is rest and stillness, one singing bird trills out a few deep notes of passion, and then the golden stillness recurs, until the mate answers from another tree in notes as laden with music and tenderness. Break, shining sea, wave after wave of joy! Sing, birds of love, and let the voice of your passion go to and fro from breast to breast! And you two pure and faithful hearts, touch each other at last, and tell in what language you please that earthly paradise is here, within your clasped

"But, Sophia," Percival says at last, "for what possible reason did you behave yourself



so very oddly when I first came into the room I really thought you were angry or frightened. What could you mean by it?" He laughs, but when he looks at her he sees

her lower lips give attwitch, and she makes a little shivering noise, as if she were going to burst out crying. "I suppose you have had so much trouble lately," he says tenderly. "Think no more about it, dear.

She hated herself for her doubts. She would confess all to him. No, she would not. Yes, she would. Then at last she answered: "It was not my home troubles, Percy. It was-it was-"What was it?" It is so sweet to bend over her and question her in this low voice.

He sees that twitch of the lip once more, He sees her eves move round the room, as if looking for something, but she stops again "What can it have been!" he asks a third Then all at once she looks up, laughing like

"Well von know it was-it was-"

a shining April shower, though her voice trembles still. "It was nothing-nothing in the world, but that I was so delighted to see you, dearest, dearest darling!" She seals that statement with a kiss. But,

my moral young woman, we have caught

CHAPTER V. LADY RIVALS WITH THE SEAS BETWEEN

you telling a decided fib.

After these first transports were over Sophia noticed that her lover spoke in a voice of sadness, and not with the exultation which so joyful a meeting might be supposed to inspire. Sophia at once remembered what she had been told of his ill fortune, and made no doubt that he was dejected by the thought of it. She could not understand what dojoc tion meant just then, being in so happy a mood that her spirits flew far above every vulgar care.

she had a kind of feeling that all would be well somehow, but she asked her lover tenderly if any anxiety pressed upon him, and he at once told her the truth. "I have not prospered," he said sadly. "Complaint always comes with a bad grace from one who is unsuccessful, but I assure you I have not had a fair chance. The man with whom I was working promised to take

me into partnership, and all seemed to go well for a while, but we had a quarrel." "About what?" Sophia asked, with keen interest. "Was Bessie Warren in the quarrel?" she says to herself. She tosses her head with a little of the triumph of the woman who has won the man. Percival is as unconscious of it as Miss Bessie Warren herself can be. "Oh, as to what we quarreled about, that is

plied, with a little hesitation. "A short time after his daughter— "So!" Sophia thought, "I was rather expecting her to come in somewhere here." "His daughter," continued Percival, "got engaged to another man-" "To another man!" exclaimed Sophia.

not of any great importance," Percival re-

"How sharp you girls are in love matters!" says plain Percival, not seeing her drift, how-"It was not exactly an affair; I think she took a liking to a man who would not take a liking to her." "Now just tell me," Sophia said, stopping

"Had she an affair with any one before?"

him here, "was she pretty?" "How quick you girls are to ask about each other's faces!" cries plain Percival again. "She is in Australia, and you here. Pretty or plain, what is it to you?" "I want to know," Sophia said, "and know

I shall. Was she pretty?" "Very pretty indeed," Percival answers. "And you say she took a liking to a man who did not take a liking to her?" "Yes; he did not care for her." All through his life Percival never under-

stood why just at this moment Sophia got a

little closer to him and pressed his hand so "Go on, Percy," she said; "tell me more." "Well, she engaged herself to another man, and he and I never got on; and then the old man became rather disagreeable, and nothing went right, and it ended in my throwing the less. Indeed, dear, if it had not been for what you hid in that pocket I should not

have been here to-day.' He stopped and shook his head sadly. "Never mind, Percy!" Sophia said gayly. "You are here in safety. Something will turn up for you. Archibald will get you something, I am sure. Archibald makes a pet of me!"

"No!" cries proud Percival, "I have got the promise of a situation in Sydney-a capital situation too, and out there I shall go, and work my way." At this Sophia's face fell, and she was about to speak with great eagerness, when the maid came in and announced that Goldmore wished to see Sophia in the library.

Percival was for going away, but she would not hear of it. "It is my house now," she said, with a sad smile; "you must s'ay with me a little longer. Wait until I come back."

descended to the library. She was fully prepared for the worst as regarded her mother's affairs, and, alas, money had never seemed so precious in her eyes before. Had she but a fortune now, how happy she and Percy might be! She braced herself, however, for the shock which she felt sure was coming, and opened the library door. Seated at a table, all covered with papers, were her brother-in-law and her mother's solicitor, and by the candlelight their faces, half shaded and half seen, looked very ominous. To Sophia, at least, everything seemed gloomy. Goldmore rose from his seat solemnly and set a chair for her at the table, and then with his usual three syllable ceremony began to speak.

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